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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 08 ZAGREB 00954

SIPDIS

VIENNA ALSO FOR USDEL CSBM; ISLAMABAD FOR POL/JPOGUE

HELSENKI FOR USDEL CSCE

STATE PASS TO AID FOR EUR/RME AND FHA/OFDA/DRD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PGOV PREL PREF PHUM MOPS HR PREL PREF PHUM MOPS HR PREL PREF PHUM MOPS HR PREL PREF PHUM MOPS HR PREL PREF PHUM MOPS
SUBJECT: SERBS AND CROATS IN GORSKI KOTAR: A TALE
OF TWO DISTRICTS

1. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

SUMMARY

12. A CONSULATE VISIT TO TWO DISTRICTS OF THE MIXED
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CROAT/SERB GORSKI KOTAR REGION PROVIDED BOTH A
HOPEFUL AND NEGATIVE PICTURE OF FUTURE RELATIONS
BETWEEN SERBS AND CROATS IN CROATIA. DIFFERING
WARTIME EXPERIENCES IN VRBOVSKO AND OGULIN, ONLY 30
KM APART, HAVE COLORED SERB/CROAT RELATIONSHIPS IN
THE TWO DISTRICTS FOR YEARS TO COME. IN VRBOVSKO,
WHILE TENSIONS WERE HIGH, ACTUAL FIGHTING NEVER TOOK
PLACE, AND WITH THE OVERALL CONFLICT ENDING IN
CROATIA, INTERETHNIC RELATIONS SEEM TO BE TAKING A
TURN FOR THE BETTER. IN OGULIN, WHERE SERBS FLED AND
WHERE THE FRONT LINE IS ONLY 15 KM AWAY, SITTING DOWN
AT THE SAME TABLE TOGETHER IS STILL A MAJOR TASK FOR
THE AREA'S CROATS AND SERBS. THE VILLAGE OF JASENAK,
A PREDOMINANTLY SERB VILLAGE IN THE OGULIN DISTRICT,
IS THE SITE OF A CONTROVERSIAL DISPLACED PERSON
CENTER. BOTH THE EC AND THE UNHCR ARE ACTIVELY
ENGAGED THERE TO SEE THAT THE SENSITIVITIES OF ALL
SIDES ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. THE EC AND UNHCR WILL
NOT BE HERE FOREVER, HOWEVER, AND THE PROCESS OF
RECONCILIATION WILL BE DIFFICULT AT BEST. IN SOME
SITUATIONS, UNFORTUNATELY, RECONCILIATION SEEMS A
DISTANT DREAM IF NOT AN IMPOSSIBILITY. END SUMMARY.

13. IN RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS REGARDING THE
TREATMENT OF SERBS IN THE GORSKI KOTAR REGION OF
CROATIA, WE VISITED TWO DISTRICTS (VRBOVSKO AND
OGULIN) IN THE AREA ON JUNE 3. DISCUSSIONS WITH
SERBS AND CROATS REVEALED A REMARKABLE DIFFERENCE IN
INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NEIGHBORING
DISTRICTS. VRBOVSKO AND OGULIN ARE LOCATED IN THE
HEART OF THE MOUNTAINOUS GORSKI KOTAR REGION,
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APPROXIMATELY 50 - 60 KM SOUTHWEST OF KARLOVAC. IN
VRBOVSKO, WE MET TOGETHER WITH DISTRICT OFFICIALS AS
WELL AS THE POLICE (ALL CROATS) AND WITH SERBS

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	EUR-01	HA-09	H-01	INRE-00	INR-01	IO-19	LAB-04
	L-03	ADS-00	NEA-01	NSAE-00	OIC-02	PM-01	P-01
	RP-10	SC T-03	SDEL-01	SIL-01	SNP-01	SP-01	SR-01
	SS-01	STR-20	TRSE-00	T-01	/089W		

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FM AMCONSUL ZAGREB
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1123
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN

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OGULIN: STILL IN A STATE OF WAR

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110. A LOT OF THE TENSION COMES FROM OGULIN'S WAR-TIME EXPERIENCE. A JNA BARRACKS WAS LOCATED IN THE CENTER OF THE CITY OF OGULIN, NEXT DOOR TO THE DISTRICT HALL. CONSIDERABLE FIGHTING TOOK PLACE IN THE CITY BEFORE THE JNA ABANDONED THE SITE. IN ADDITION, THE CITY IS LOCATED ONLY 15 KM FROM THE FRONT LINE AND SOME OF THE OGULIN DISTRICT REMAINS UNDER THE CONTROL OF KRAJINA FORCES (BUT OUTSIDE THE UNPAS, AS LOCAL OFFICIALS ARE QUICK TO POINT OUT). ADDITIONALLY, THOUGH THERE ARE NO CONCRETE FIGURES, MANY SERBS LEFT OGULIN BEFORE AND DURING THE WAR, LEAVING A BAD TASTE AMONG MANY CROATS WHO BELIEVE THAT THEY ALL LEFT TO FIGHT FOR THE "CHETNIKS" AGAINST THEIR OLD NEIGHBORS. SABORSKO (THE CROATIAN TOWN REFERRED TO IN PARA 9) RESIDENTS, EMBITTERED BY THE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR VILLAGE, IN WHICH THEY CLAIM

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55 OF THE 1,600 PRE-WAR POPULATION WERE KILLED,
ARGUED THAT JUSTICE MUST BE DONE TO THOSE SERBS
RESPONSIBLE. AND THEY SAY THEY PERSONALLY KNOW THE

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ACTION AID-01							
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	EUR-01	HA-09	H-01	INRE-00	INR-01	IO-19	LAB-04
	L-03	ADS-00	NEA-01	NSAE-00	OIC-02	PM-01	P-01
	RP-10	SC7-03	SDEL-01	SL1-01	SNP-01	SP-01	SR-01
	SS-01	STR-20	TRSE-00	T-01	/089W		

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1127
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY
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USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KIEV
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
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AMCONSUL MILAN
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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OF TWO DISTRICTS

INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBLE. STILL, ONE FORMER SABORSKO RESIDENT SAID HE HAD NOTHING AGAINST THE SERBS AS A PEOPLE, HE JUST WANTED THOSE RESPONSIBLE TO BE PUNISHED

11. SUCH A POSITIVE ATTITUDE OFTEN DOES NOT MANIFEST
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ITSELF IN PRACTICE. SOME EXAMPLES:

-- BEFORE THE WAR, IN OGULIN, ACCORDING TO THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT (A MEMBER OF THE RULING CROATIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION, CDU), 75 PERCENT OF THE POLICE FORCE WAS MADE UP OF SERBS. NOW THAT FIGURE HAS BEEN REVERSED IN FAVOR OF CROATS. WERE SERBS FIRED? NO, SAY CROATS. SERBS IN THE POLICE LEFT OGULIN; THE TOTAL NUMBER OF POLICE WAS INCREASED; ALL FIVE POLICE INSPECTORS ARE SERBS WHO HAVE BEEN KEPT ON IN ORDER TO "USE" THEIR KNOWLEDGE.
(COMMENT: WE ARE NOT IMPRESSED BY CLAIMS THAT NOONE WAS FIRED IN OGULIN BASED ON NATIONALITY. THE REPORTS FROM VRBOVSKO AND ELSEWHERE SAY OTHERWISE.
END COMMENT.)

-- ACCORDING TO A SERB MEMBER OF THE CROATIAN
 ASSEMBLY, EMPTY HOUSES, KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED
 BY SERBS, HAVE BEEN THE TARGETS OF BOMB ATTACKS.
 NOONE PRESENT DENIED THE CLAIM. HOWEVER, SYMBOLIC OF
 THE DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE THAT SERBS IN THE ROOM FELT
 COMPELLED TO USE, THE SERB ASSEMBLYMAN SAID THAT
 THESE WERE "CONSEQUENCES OF A PROCESS I UNDERSTAND."
 HE WAS REFERRING, AS DID OTHER SERBS, TO THE
 EGREGIOUS ACTS OF FELLOW SERBS AROUND OGULIN, THE
 KRAJINA AND IN THE REST OF CROATIA.

-- THE SAME ASSEMBLY MEMBER NOTED THE KILLING OF 10 PEOPLE (PRESUMABLY SERBS) IN THE OGULIN PRISON. (COMMENT: IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS ACT IS CURRENTLY BEING PROSECUTED BY CROATIAN AUTHORITIES.

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END COMMENT.)

JASENAK

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	L-03	ADS-00	NEA-01	NSAE-00	OIC-02	PM-01	P-01
	RP-10	SCT-03	SDEL-01	SIL-01	SNP-01	SP-01	SR-01
	SS-01	STR-20	TRSE-00	T-01	/089W		
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1128
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KIEV
AMEMBASSY LISBON
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AMCONSUL MILAN
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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[illegible]

112. JASENAK IS A PREDOMINANTLY SERB VILLAGE IN THE
OGULIN DISTRICT WHICH HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF SOME
CONTROVERSY WITH ALLEGATIONS BY SERBS REGARDING THE
TEMPORARY SETTLEMENT OF NON-SERB DISPLACED THERE.

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ACCORDING TO THE OGULIN DISTRICT CHIEF, THERE ARE
CURRENTLY 200 DISPLACED PEOPLE HOUSED NEAR JASENAK (A
VILLAGE OF SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE) IN AN UNUSED
RESORT THAT HAS 1600 AVAILABLE BEDS. THE SERB MEMBER
OF THE CROATIAN ASSEMBLY TOLD US THAT THERE HAD BEEN
LENGTHY PREPARATIONS BEFORE THE DISPLACED PERSONS HAD
BEEN BROUGHT TO JASENAK. DISCUSSIONS HAD BEEN HELD
WITH THE DISPLACED AND THE VILLAGERS SEPARATELY IN
ORDER TO PREPARE THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE ARRIVAL OF THE
DISPLACED. IN ADDITION, BOTH THE EC MONITORING
MISSION, WITH REPS HOUSED IN THE AREA, AND THE UNHCR
ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN MAKING THE JASENAK SITUATION
WORK. FRESH FROM A JUNE 5 VISIT TO JASENAK, UNHCR
CROATIA HEAD JEAN-CLAUDE CONSOLATO TOLD US JUNE 9
THAT THERE WERE ONLY 38 DISPLACED STAYING NEAR
JASENAK. ALL OF THEM WERE OF RUTHENIAN NATIONALITY.
FOR NOW, THE SITUATION IS UNDER NEW CONTROL AND NO
NEW, IMMEDIATE INFLOWS OF DISPLACED ARE PLANNED.

COMMENT

113. THE EXPERIENCE OF VRBOVSKO SUGGESTS THAT IN THESE AREAS OF CROATIA WHERE FIGHTING OR EXPULSIONS DID NOT TAKE PLACE THERE IS SOME HOPE OF RECONCILIATION. UNFORTUNATELY, A FAVORABLE LOCAL CLIMATE CAN BE SPOILED BY OUTSIDE ACTIONS (E.G. DISMISSALS MADE BY ORGANIZATIONS BASED OUTSIDE THE AREA OR MEDIA HYPE FROM ZAGREB THAT INACCURATELY DESCRIBES A PARTICULAR SITUATION). ELSEWHERE, WHERE LARGE NUMBERS OF SERBS OR CROATS FLED, AND FIGHTING

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ENSUED, IT'S GOING TO TAKE MORE. ALL SERBS RETURNING
TO THEIR VILLAGES WILL BE VIEWED SUSPICIOUSLY
(WITNESS THE LENGTHY WAR CRIMES LISTS ALREADY BEING

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ACTION AID-01

INFO	LOG-00	AMAD-01	CIAE-00	C-01	DODE-00	CISA-02	EB-01
	EUR-01	HA-09	H-01	INRE-00	INR-01	IO-19	LAB-04
	L-03	ADS-00	NEA-01	NSAE-00	OIC-02	PM-01	P-01
	RP-10	SCT-03	SDEL-01	SL-01	SNP-01	SP-01	SR-01
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PRINTED IN CROATIAN NEWSPAPERS). EVERYONE FEELS VIOLATED OR BETRAYED, AND IN MANY CASES BY FORMER FRIENDS, RELATIVES OR NEIGHBORS. FOR SERBS WHO STAYED THROUGHOUT, IT WILL BE REQUIRED, RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, THAT THEY ESTABLISH THEIR LOYALTY AND ATONE IN SOME WAY FOR THE TRANSGRESSIONS OF THEIR BRETHREN.

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114. IT IS OUR VIEW THAT EVEN IN AREAS WHERE SOME EFFORTS TOWARD RECONCILIATION ARE UNDER WAY, ANY REAL SUCCESS DEPENDS ON THE OVERALL CLIMATE AS DEFINED BY ZAGREB. PROGRESS IN INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS HAS BEEN TENUOUS AT BEST IN A FEW AREAS, WHILE IN MOST AREAS NO SUCH EFFORTS HAVE GOTTEN UNDER WAY, NOR WILL THEY UNTIL THE WAR IS OVER AND THE UNPROFOR HAS DONE ITS JOB. SUCCESS IN REINTEGRATING SERBS INTO CROATIA WILL COME ONLY IN CONJUNCTION WITH A POSITIVE ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE REPUBLIC LEADERSHIP. WE BELIEVE LITTLE IMPROVEMENT IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT CLEAR SIGNALS FROM ZAGREB. END COMMENT. EINIK

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